

Improved Staffing Process Frequently Asked Questions

Q: To what does this improved staffing process apply?

A: This process applies to vacancy and lateral reassignment announcements. This process starts from when an approved SF52 is received by the staffing specialist to when the offer is issued to the selected candidate.

Q: Does the Staffing Process apply to internal and external vacancies?

A: Yes.

Q: What are CPP, DEU, and Lateral Reassignment (Notice) Announcements?

A. CPP is a Competitive Placement Plan announcement which is open to current MSFC federal employees and, in some instances, current NASA and other federal employees. DEU is a Delegated Examining Unit announcement which is open to the general public (non-civil servants). Lateral Reassignment (Notice) is an internal announcement in which a candidate is reassigned laterally at his/her current grade level with no further potential.

Q: How are the status and needs from the organization communicated?

A: Primarily, through five standard emails that provide the vacancies staffing timeline, requirements, list of candidates and instructions for the New Employee Orientation. These messages are sent to the selecting official, administrative officer and supporting human resources specialist.

Q: How long can Vacancy Announcements be open?

A. It depends on the type of vacancy announcement. A CPP announcement is open for ten work days if it is covered under a bargaining unit; six work days if it is excluded from coverage under a bargaining unit. A DEU announcement is normally open ten work days; it can be open for a shorter period if there is reasonable expectation of receipt of a large number of applicants. A Lateral Reassignment is open for eleven work days.

Q: Does the “List of Skills”, identified by the Selecting Official, apply to Ten-Point Compensable Veterans who are considered under DEU announcements?

A. Yes. If it is a “no float” position (GS-09 and above professional position, e.g., Engineer), the veteran is given the ten extra points and placed in the appropriate category. He/she will then be at the top of that category. However, if it is a “float” position (position with no positive education requirement, or a GS-07 Engineer), a compensable veteran goes to the top of the register and only has to be minimally qualified.

Q: What is a Certificate?

A: A Certificate or a List of Eligibles is a list of highly qualified applicants to be interviewed for consideration of employment (reassignment or promotion, if it is an internal announcement) after applying to a vacancy announcement.

Q: What happens if it takes longer than 10 days to review applications, interview candidates and make a selection?

A: In those rare occasions, the selecting official should notify the staffing specialist and administrative officer by email of the reason and request an extension.

Q: When a supervisor selects a candidate, specifically from outside the NASA community, are negotiations conducted?

A: Yes. When an applicant is made a written offer, OPM regulations require the agency to offer the position at the Step 1 level. However, the candidate can return the offer letter accepting the position, but advising the Office of Human Capital (OHC) that they would like a higher salary, and they provide a dollar figure. If a higher salary is requested, selectee must provide proof of current salary (pay stub, etc.), or proof of another offer with a higher salary. OHC then reviews the request, discusses with the organization who selected the candidate, and request agreement or not to negotiated salary. In addition, selectees may request other benefits, such as relocation and recruitment bonuses, enhanced leave or travel, which are also coordinated with the selecting official.

Q: Where can one find additional information on NASA Flexibilities?

A: http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/hclwp/FAQSFeb23_2006.pdf

Q: What information and approvals are required for increased steps?

A. The Staffing Specialist notifies the selecting official. If the selecting official decides to request a higher step, the selecting official must then submit a justification (by memo) to the Workforce Strategy and Planning Office Manager for approval.

Q: Are selecting officials required to interview all candidates?

A. For those positions covered by the bargaining units, each candidate on the certificate of eligibles will normally be interviewed when the selecting official has limited knowledge about that individual. It is strongly recommended that if one candidate on a certificate is interviewed, then all candidates on that certificate must be interviewed.

Q: In scheduling interviews, how much effort is required on the Selecting Official's part to contact a candidate who does not call back, after a number of messages have been left?

A. You should make every effort to contact the candidate, either by email or by phone. If after a reasonable amount of time has passed and still no response from the candidate, you should document your efforts (time frame in which you attempted to reach them and the number of attempts made.) On DEU announcements, if you're unable to reach a candidate who is a Veteran, you should notify your Staffing Specialist for further guidance.

Q: Does the Selecting Official request candidates, who are outside the commuting area, pay for their own travel to conduct an interview with us?

A: No. Organizations should conduct telephone interviews initially. If the organization is narrowing down its selection and would like to conduct a face-to-face interview to enable a final selection, then it is suggested that the organization issue invitational travel orders to the candidate.

Q: Who funds the travel for an interview?

A: The selecting organization funds the travel.

Q: Should the Selecting Official select more than one candidate from the Cert List?

A. Yes, especially if the Selecting Official is filling a position from the external community. Identifying, in priority order, the top 2-3 candidates provides the Staffing Unit an opportunity to make additional offers in a timely manner should the top candidate decline.

Q: What happens if candidate declines the offer?

A: Alternate selections are issued an offer. Selecting officials are encouraged to provide a priority list of candidates to make this process quicker.

Q: What is the process for notifying candidates who are not selected for a position?

A: The candidates are notified of non-selection within 5-10 days of the selection.

Q: What is a KAIZEN?

A: Kaizen is a Japanese term that means continuous improvement of working practices efficiency by the elimination (at a minimum reduction) of waste as a business philosophy. Taken from words 'Kai' and 'zen', which means

KAI – Continuous, take apart and make new; rebuild; redo and

ZEN – Improvement, think; make good the actions of others; help each other; do good deeds.

Q: How are decisions made by the High Grade Committee communicated to organizations?

A: Danny Hightower, Manager of Employees Services and Operations Office, sends a memorandum, which contains the decisions of the High Grade Committee to the appropriate organizations.

Q: How does one convert a term employee to a permanent employee?

A. It depends on the authority under which the employee was hired. For example, if the current term appointment was made from an announcement issued prior to July 8, 2004 (date the NASA Flexibility Act became effective), then the employee must compete under an external (DEU) announcement for a permanent position. However, if the employee was hired from an announcement issued on or after July 8, 2004, and the announcement included the eligibility requirements for conversion to permanent under the Flexibility Act, the employee may be eligible after completion of two continuous under Term appointment and meeting the other requirements under the Act. Additional information on Term appointments under the Flexibility Act can be found at <http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/hclwp/term-appointments.htm>.

Q: If selected to term position, can automatically be converted to permanent position?

A: No. Conversion is not an entitlement. Management must have authority to fill a permanent position.

Q: Can term employee be kept up to 12 years?

A. The maximum time under any one Term appointment with NASA is six years. However, if an employee were selected to a different Term position under a new appointment, their total employment may exceed six years.

Q: Does dual career path still exist?

A: Yes, there is still a dual career path. Engineers can progress beyond the journeyman level into supervisory or team leader positions or they can progress along a path that leads to non-leadership positions as technical experts. However, the very first merit principle in the federal government states that employees are promoted on the basis of merit after fair and open competition. As vacancies occur in these positions, announcements will be generated so employees can fairly compete for promotions and reassignments. The law provides for exceptions to this process in certain circumstances but those circumstances are by definition exceptions.

Q: Can you take a vacancy and use a PIJ to fill it?

A: No. By definition, a PIJ is a person-in-the-job. The person is already in the job. This is one of the few exceptions identified in the previous question.

Q: What is the impact of the new security requirements to the staffing process?

A: The final impacts are not known. The Office of Human Capital is working with the Protective Services Office to understand the requirements and impact to the staffing process and schedule. A kaizen is in place to determine the most efficient process for these new requirements. As soon as the requirements are added to this process, we will communicate them to you.